The Constitution of The John Jay Society

I. Purpose & mission

The John Jay Society exists for the formation of virtuous leaders in the undergraduate body of Columbia University who share The Society's values through engaging in the earnest pursuit of truth as a community of friends.

II. Procedural overview

The Society's primary function centers on debates in the traditional British Parliamentary fashion, central to which are rhetoric, tradition, wit, humor, dialectical questioning, and rigorous persuasion. The resolutions The Society debates, along with all other procedure-bound traditional matters exemplify The Society's philosophical and aesthetic bent, which is of commensurate significance to The Society's character. Both should provoke reverence for the tradition and form the members of The Society.

A. Philosophical Bent

The central intellectual thrust of The Society is centered on the Judeo-Christian Western tradition through its moral, political, and natural legal philosophy. Typically abstract resolutions that foster debate explicitly referencing these principles as illuminated by the American conservative intellectual tradition should deepen the understanding of and provoke a sense of wonder at their richness and significance. The formation of moral character among both members and petitioners must come naturally through the friendship and argument that The Society's activities encourage. This intellectual charism is founded by a sense of wonder at the Truth, the earnest desire to pursue it, and its resolutely thorough defense.

B. Aesthetic bent

The atmosphere of The Society's debates and all other procedure-bound traditional matters should create a place of awe and removal from the everyday to help steward a deep appreciation and admiration for the beauty of the Western Tradition. The Society reflects this through important details such as wearing formal attire, punctiliously upholding traditions, exercising beautiful rhetoric, and enjoying of other forms of culture whenever possible like drinks, food, and song. Idiosyncratic customs, titles, songs and the like are to further this sense of awe. The aesthetic bent also informs who the right kind of people are for membership in The Society, and ought to display virtue's intrinsic beauty and attractiveness.

III. The regular operations of The Society shall be led by the presiding officers, namely:

A. The Chairman, who is the public face of the organization and is responsible for maintaining the esteem of The Society. The Chairman is The Society's leader at Columbia and ought to be followed and treated with commensurate respect. The Chairman oversees the regular, daily operations of The Society.

1. Presiding over the daily operations of The Society, which delimit the authority of the Chairman, shall be understood by this ostensive definition: presiding over debates and all other procedure-bound matters within the traditions of The Society, ensuring all the presiding officers diligently execute their responsibilities, overseeing retreats, and sanctioning, introducing, or presiding over member-organized events in The Society's name and interests. Any matters beyond the reasonable interpretive constraints of these operations must be confirmed with the Board of Guardians. The Board of Guardians will decide such matters by ⅞ vote, with veto power from either of the founding members of the Board of Guardians.

B. The Vice Chairman, who is the immediate Sometime Chairman, is responsible for assisting the Chairman in his duties, especially in the beginning of the Chairman's leadership, ensuring a smooth transition, stewarding the character and growth of The Society along with the other senior members, and assuming the responsibilities of Chairman should The Chairman be unable to execute his duties.

C. The Secretary, who stewards the intellectual life of The Society and ensures rigorous debates, including by recording and reciting the minutes of every debate.

D. The Chief Whip, who operates as the social glue of The Society and who principally manages the petitioning process and encourages members to participate in the life of The Society.

E. The Tribune, which as a nebulous position should be held by an experienced and well-respected member of The Society, helps The Chairman steer the ship, ensures the unity of the membership, overall stability, and fruitfulness of The Society's work.

F. The Treasurer, who takes care of financial affairs.

G. The Chamberlain, who presents and provides the drinks of the night and ensures the general liveliness.

IV. The Board of Guardians, which generally consists of senior and alumni Sometime Chairmen, is the final authority on all aspects of The Society above the purview of the presiding officers. Examples of decisions this body is responsible for include substantive changes to procedure, tradition, or core documents, and organizational or logistical matters that extend beyond those matters for which the Chairman is responsible. This body is also essential to guiding the long-term future of The Society, including financially, and ultimately ensuring constancy to her purpose, principles, and flourishing.

A. Additions to or omissions from the Board of Guardians are determined by a unanimous vote from the Board of Guardians, barring the member under consideration for omission. Members of the Board of Guardians have indubitably demonstrated indelible contributions to The Society, are undisputed paradigms of her values and intellectual commitments, possess unquestionable integrity and magnanimity, and clearly demonstrate a long-term commitment to and stewardship of The Society.

B. The Board of Guardians is divided into the Board of Guardians *simpliciter* and the Nocturnal Council. The Nocturnal Council comprises a subset of the Board of Guardians immanently active in fulfilling the positive duties of the Board of Guardians. Any member of the Board of Guardians may formally elect to be a member of the Nocturnal Council at any time. The Nocturnal Council votes on behalf of the entire Board of Guardians.

C. In general, if the Board of Guardians fails to reach the necessary threshold of votes for any proposition under consideration, then that proposition is vetoed.

V. Decision-making processes on New Leadership and Membership:

A. Members who assume positions in The John Jay Society should exemplify the following qualities, a paradigm of the core values of The Society: The highest intellectual caliber; a genuine appreciation of the Western tradition and its vision of human flourishing; a commitment to objective truth, goodness, and beauty; an affirmation of the duty to pursue such transcendentals, a general disposition of virtuous leadership, and knowledge of intellectual history.

B. Elections to the positions of Chairman and Secretary should generally correspond with the start of each new semester. Members of the Board of Guardians, presiding officers, and senior members can nominate members for candidacy to the position of Chairman and Secretary; after the standing of each candidate, this is then voted on by the membership. A two-thirds majority among the voting membership and an approval from the Board of Guardians is the required threshold for induction for each position. If two successive candidates for either position fail these requirements, then the Board of Guardians shall determine the next Chairman by the process specified below. The Chairman then selects members to serve in the other presiding officer positions for the duration of his term, who serve at the discretion of The Chairman.

1. Chairman approval or selection by the Board of Guardians is determined by a simple majority vote by the Nocturnal Council. In the case of Chairman selection, if no candidate receives the simple majority vote from the Nocturnal Council, then the Chairman is to be selected by a simple majority vote by the entire Board of Guardians. If no candidate receives the simple majority vote again, then the Chairman is selected by a unanimous decision from the Founding Members of the Board of Guardians. These members are Lucas Fernando Johannes Maria Cremers and Jonathan Michael Tanaka.

C. The induction process for membership in The Society starts with the requirements for petitioners: those who seek membership in The Society. These should be undergraduates, preferably in the first year of college and ideally in Columbia College, though students in Engineering are allowed, Barnard is acceptable, and certain students in General Studies are admissible if they are undergraduate-aged. The Society may also consider older petitioners for membership who bring exceptional value. In the beginning of the semester, preferably during the fall, the petitioners must demonstrate they are seriously interested by participation in debates and getting to know The Society's members. Over the first half of the semester, the presiding officers, aided by the membership, must determine which of these petitioners share The Society's values and are in other respects an enriching addition to The Society. All petitioners invited to an induction caucus of The John Jay Society must hold four fundamental commitments:

1. Objective Truth and the commitment to pursue it with integrity.
2. Objective morality and the commitment to pursue it with integrity.
3. Appreciation of the beauty of the Western intellectual and aesthetic tradition.
4. Potency for the highest form of friendship.

Those who meet these criteria then enter the induction process, which if completed successfully, ensures their membership in The Society.

1. The Society is interested in accepting intellectually honest and principled undergraduates who may not initially share all The Society's values but in whom The Society sees significant potential for growth.
2. Prior to their induction, a list of petitioners must be presented by the Chairman to the Nocturnal Council, who by simple majority may forbid the induction of any petitioner.

VI. This constitution may be amended by two thirds vote of the Board of Guardians, with a veto available by unanimous vote of the founding members of the Board of Guardians.